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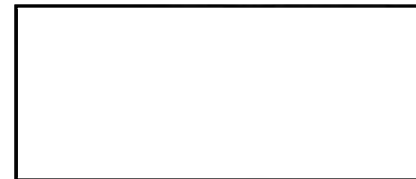
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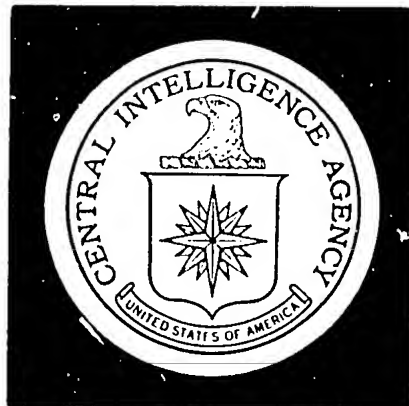
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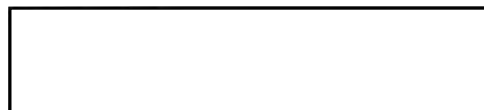
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Intelligence Memorandum

*The Growth And Current Deployment Of The Laotian-Based
559th Transportation Group*



NSA review completed

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
February 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Growth And Current Deployment
Of The Laotian-Based
559th Transportation Group

Introduction

The North Vietnamese over many years have developed a complex logistical system in south Laos -- the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail -- to support their forces in South Vietnam. Always important to the enemy's war effort in northern South Vietnam, the system has become since the closing of the port of Kompong Som (formerly Sihanoukville) the vital life line for the Communist forces in all of South Vietnam and Cambodia.

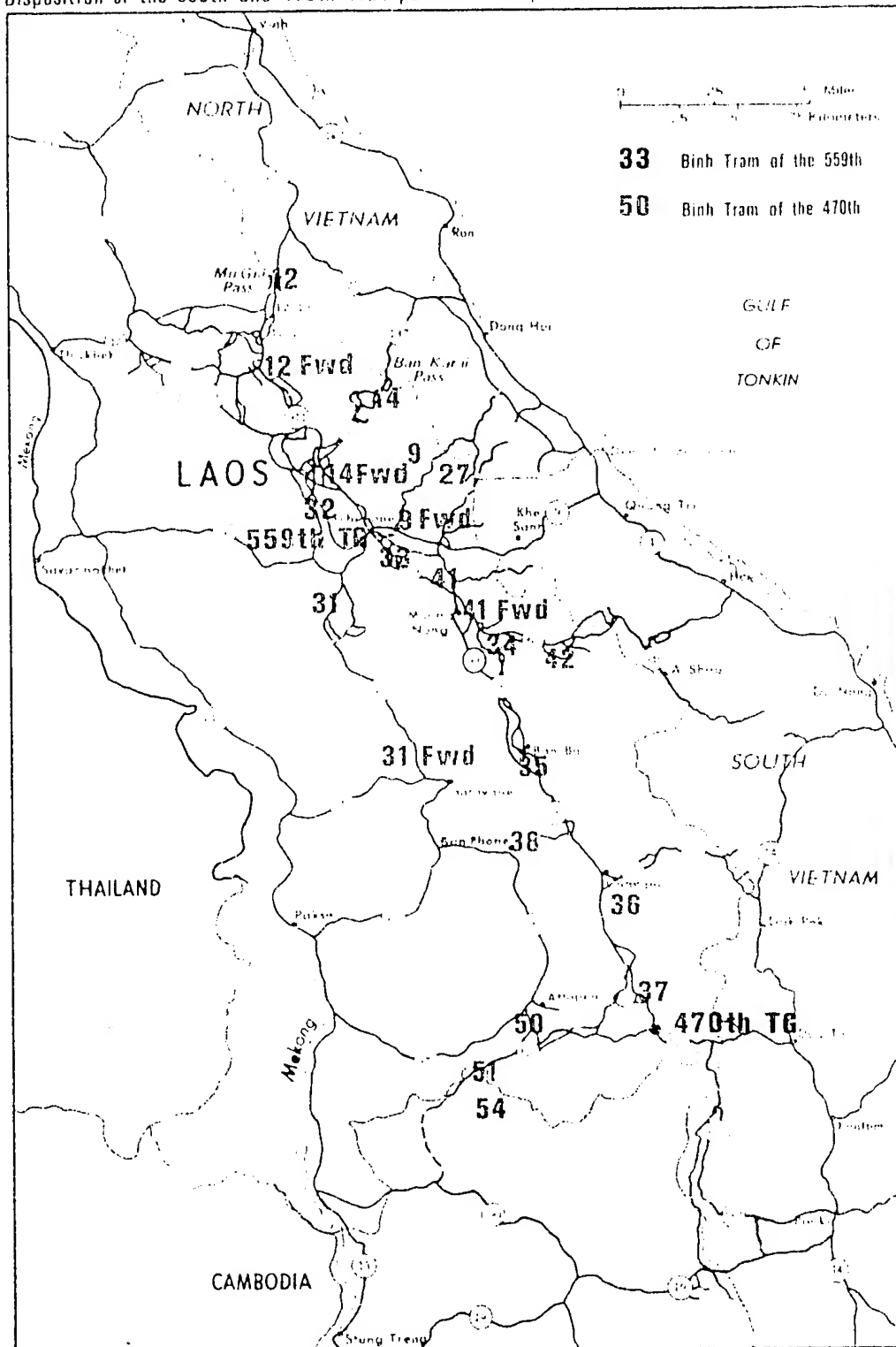
In 1959 the Communist logistic forces in south Laos consisted of a single battalion with a strength of about 500 men. Today this strength has grown to between 40,000 and 50,000 personnel organized into two major transportation groups -- the 559th which dates back to May (the fifth month) of 1959 and the 470th which was established as recently as April (the fourth month) of 1970.

The logistic forces in south Laos operate within a corridor 300 miles in length and from 50 to 75 miles wide containing about 1,500 miles of main and bypass roads plus thousands of trails and two waterways. In its northern reaches there are two POL pipelines that have been constructed since 1968. Sixteen Binh Trams now extend throughout South Laos (see Figure 1) each functioning as a regimental-size authority controlling personnel and supply movements

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Economic Research and coordinated within CIA.

Figure 1

Disposition of the 559th and 470th Transportation Groups in the Laotian Panhandle



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through a specific geographic area. Each Binh Tram has subordinate to it the necessary transportation, engineer, infantry, medical, and air defense elements needed to carry out its responsibilities.

This memorandum provides a current assessment of the Communist logistic forces in south Laos and provides an historical review of their development from 1959 to 1970 (see Appendix A). A chronology of significant events in the development of the 559th is contained in Appendix B.

Strengths

1. Communist logistics strength in the Laotian Panhandle is now centered on two organizational entities: the long-established 559th Transportation Group, and the recently established 470th Transportation Group. The estimated combined strength of both groups is about 40,000 to 50,000 men with about three-fourths of the total forces assigned to the 559th. Administratively, the groups are divided into Binh Trams. The subordination of identified battalions is given in Tables 1 and 2.

2. The tabulation below shows the growth of logistics personnel operating in the Laotian Panhandle for selected years since 1959.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Personnel Strength</u>
1959	400 - 500
1961	2,000 - 2,500
1963	3,500 - 4,500
1967	10,000 - 13,000
1968	20,000 - 30,000
1969	30,000 - 40,000
1970	40,000 - 50,000

Growth during the last 11 years has been rapid, but most striking during the 1967-68 period, at which time the North Vietnamese undertook a rapid buildup of men and supplies to meet the quickening

Table 1

Currently Identified Battalions Subordinate to Binh Trams of the 559th Transportation Group a/

<u>Binh Tram</u>	<u>Area of Operations</u>	<u>Antiaircraft Artillery</u>	<u>Engineer</u>	<u>Transport</u>	<u>Communications Liaison</u>
9	Western DMZ input corridor from North Vietnam	4th 7th 16th 17th 24th	94th 337th 668th	878th	-
12	Mu Gia Pass input corridor from North Vietnam	2nd	2nd	660th 770th	-
14	Ban Karai Pass input corridor from North Vietnam	13th 17th 21st 29th/42nd	13th 24th 335th	52nd 781st	7th
27	Western DMZ input corridor (Se Bang Hieng River) from North Vietnam	35th 18th 34th	25th	161st 162nd 163rd	-
31	Route 23/238 area south of Muong Phine	14th	27th 93rd	53rd	-
32	Route 91/914/917 Complex north of Tchepone	1st 12th 16th 22nd	31st 35th 69th	60th 102nd 990th	9th
33	Route 9/914 southeast of Tchepone	20th 26th	71st	61st 965th	10th
34 b/	South of Muong Nong along Route 92 and 922	10th 44th	29th	51st 101st	11th
35	Ban Bac area Route 92/96	6th 32nd	5th 41st 43rd	59th 162nd	12th
41	Route 9/925/926 exit corridor to South Vietnam	4th 8th 28th	1st 2nd 39th 73rd 75th	54th	14th

Table 1

Currently Identified Battalions Subordinate to Binh Trams of the 559th Transportation Group a/
(Continued)

Binh Tram	Area of Operations	Antiaircraft Artillery	Engineer	Transport	Communications Liaison
42	Route 922 exit corridor to South Vietnam	2nd 36th	4th 37th 45th 47th	55th	15th
44	Route 165/966 exit corridor to South Vietnam	28th	1st 2nd	56th	17th

a. A dash indicates that battalions of this type have not been identified. There are additional units that may be under the control of the 559th, but not subordinate to its Binh Trams. These include the 24B (4th Battalion only) and 48th Infantry Regiments; elements of the 4th, 10th, and 98th Engineer Regiments; and elements of the 282nd and 591st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiments. The status of other units such as the 141st Infantry and 675B Artillery Regiments is not clear, but they may also be associated with the 559th.

Overall strength estimates given in paragraph 2 were derived by aggregating the reported strengths of units associated with the 559th. Where reported strengths were lacking, force levels were estimated by averaging the reported strengths for each type of unit and applying that average to the number of units of that type associated with the 559th. A net addition of 10,000 men were added to the 1970 estimate, reflecting personnel infiltration data carried in the 5,000 series, which identify groups destined for southern Laos probably for the 559th and 470th.

b. Also subordinate to Binh Tram 34 are the 26th and 133rd Signal Battalions that have the responsibility for stringing and maintaining land lines. There are probably signal battalions attached to other Binh Trams that have not been identified.

Table 2

Identified Battalions Subordinate to Binh Trams of the 470th Transportation Group a/

<u>Binh Tram</u>	<u>Area of Operations</u>	<u>Antiaircraft Artillery</u>	<u>Engineer</u>	<u>Transport</u>	<u>Communications Liaison</u>
36	Chavane area, Route 96 and 165	40th	341st	972nd	-
37	Junction of Route 96 and 110 east of Attapeu	30th 38th	2nd	58th	16th
38	Ban Phore area Route 15	-	-	-	-
50	Possibly along the Se Kong River south of Attapeu	-	-	-	-
51	Unlocated; probably in Cambodia	-	-	-	-
54	Unlocated; probably in Cambodia	-	-	-	-

a. A dash indicates that battalions of this type have not been identified.

pace of the war in the South. The net increase that occurred in 1970 was the result of the emergence of the 470th and the augmentation of the 559th.

3. In addition to the 559th and the 470th, two other major military commands operate in southern Laos - the 565th Group and the 968th Front. The 565th serves both as the senior NVA administrative authority in south Laos and as the adviser to Pathet Lao forces. The 968th Front is responsible for ground security in the Panhandle and controls most of the infantry units there.

Response to Cambodia

4. The current deployment of enemy logistics forces, as shown on Figure 1, reflects adjustments that the North Vietnamese instituted shortly after the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk and the Allied incursions into Cambodia last spring. At that time the 559th Group, after apparently completing its mission for the 1969-70 dry season, was preparing to withdraw many of its units to North Vietnam as had been done in the 1967 and 1969 wet seasons. This intention changed abruptly with the Allied cross-border operations into Cambodia. The operation had a telling impact on the enemy in at least two respects. First, he was forced to abandon sizable stockpiles of supplies as his forces withdrew deeper into Cambodia. Second, and perhaps more important over the longer term, the cross-border operations established a new precedent which the enemy feared might lead to similar Allied operations in southern Laos.

5. On the basis of these considerations, Hanoi decided to keep most of the 559th Transportation Group in the Laotian Panhandle during the 1970 wet season. The group would remain not only to carry additional supplies south if needed but also to protect the lines of communication (LOCs) through south Laos in the event of Allied attack. The security of the route through the Laotian Panhandle, now the only avenue for large-scale movement of arms and ammunition to their forces, was critical if the Communists were to maintain a credible military posture.

6. Hanoi's decision to keep the 559th in the Laotian Panhandle during the entire wet season was not based on the expectation of moving supplies through the system in amounts sufficient to replace those lost to the Allied cross-border operations. The 559th's actions during the wet season indicate that Hanoi had three things in mind: (a) to provide security for the system as protection against Allied incursions, (b) to be in a position to get the dry season logistics program off to an early start in the fall, and (c) to make use of the entry route through the western DMZ -- the shortest route structure subject to air interdiction -- for the movement of supplies that would be needed within the system during the wet season.

7. An initial adjustment by the enemy was to deploy seven or eight engineer, transportation, and antiaircraft artillery battalions from the northern Panhandle to the central Panhandle adjacent to the entry corridor around the DMZ. Units of the 559th remaining in the Mu Gia Pass area not tasked with security were allowed to withdraw to North Vietnam, and the Binh Tram in the area was temporarily deactivated. At about the same time, large-scale supply movement into south Laos through the Ban Karai Pass was ended. As the wet season in the Panhandle continued, the level of supply shipments declined. Worsening weather and continued air strikes reduced the trafficability of the roadnet causing continued POL shortages, especially in the southern portion of the Panhandle. While available evidence indicates that the quantity of supplies moved was somewhat below that planned for the wet season, the 559th did move sufficient quantities both to support an increase in the combat structure of forces in the Panhandle and to increase its own personnel strength. This expansion of forces enabled increased security of the LOCs and facilitated efforts of the 559th to take on the additional burden of supporting Communist forces in the COSVN area who previously were supplied from Cambodia.

8. As the dry season of 1970-71 approached, the 559th began to redeploy many of its units in anticipation of the heavy workload ahead. Elements of Binh Tram (BT) 31 formerly located on the roadnet just south of Mu Gia Pass were relocated south of Muong Phine where Route 23 intersects with the

Se Bang Hieng River. BT 38 formerly located at the intersection of Route 110, the Se Kong River, and the Cambodian border was relocated north to Ban Phone apparently to receive supplies from BT 31 via the Route 16/23 complex. The new deployment of BT 38 also meant that it now could receive supplies shipped from BT 35 in Ban Bac via the northern Se Kong River and transship them again on the river to the Attopeu area.

9. Early in October the radio terminal formerly associated with the Forward Headquarters of the 559th redeployed south of the Ban Bac area to the junction of Routes 96/110. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] three new Binh Trams numbered 50, 51, and 54. At least one of these Binh Trams (BT 50) is believed to be located in the area south of Attopeu along the Se Kong River and Route 110. If the enemy has adhered to past practices of sequential numbering of Binh Trams, it is likely that the higher numbered Binh Trams in the 50 series are deployed further south, possibly along Route 97 in Cambodia. While information concerning the function and geographic control of the 470th is limited, it is believed to control all known Communist logistic operations south of the Ban Bac area, including BTs 36, 37, and 38 and those in the 50 series. Moreover, the location of the Binh Trams in the 50 series suggests that the primary mission of the group is to support enemy operations in Cambodia.

11. Although the present command relationship between the 559th and 470th is not clear, we believe that both have equal status in that they each report directly to the General Directorate of Rear Services (GDRS) in Hanoi and have ultimate responsibility for their own area of operations.

12. Even while reorganizing, the 559th continued to prepare the Panhandle logistics system for the dry season. By mid-November its roadnet was operational, and extensive construction was under way on new support and storage facilities. New bypass routes were constructed in the Chavane and Ban Bac areas and a connector road between Route 1032B and 925 was built. By mid-January 1971 the general transportation offensive of the 1970-71 dry season was under way, and very large quantities of supplies were moving south through its area of responsibility.

Prospects

13. During the next few months the 559th can be expected to continue to attempt to improve the logistics system in the northern and central Panhandle. New bypass routes probably will be constructed and antiaircraft artillery defenses improved. The 559th may also upgrade infantry units assigned to protect its Binh Trams from companies to battalions in the wake of continued harassment of their LOCs by friendly irregular forces.

14. With respect to the 470th, it may attempt to open Route 16 around the Bolovens Plateau from Ban Phone to Attapeu, providing that the 968th front gives it adequate security against friendly guerrilla operations staged from the eastern rim of the Plateau. In addition, it probably will also reopen Route 97 which runs from the terminus of Route 110 in Laos along the Tonle Kong River into Cambodia and on to Siem Pang. This route coupled with the existing route structure in Cambodia will probably provide a direct truckable route from southern Laos to Communist forces operating in the Kratie region of Cambodia. Once this route is operating, the 470th can be expected to begin substantial supply shipments to COSVN, the major control authority for Communist forces operating in southern Indochina. If the responsibility of the 470th is to extend into Cambodia, however, its structure and personnel strength will probably require significant upgrading. In this connection, since early September, some 5,700 personnel have been observed in the infiltration pipeline destined for the 470th.

APPENDIX A

Historical Review of the 559th Transportation Group

This appendix essentially reviews and highlights factors underlying the development of the 559th Transportation Group from early in 1959 to May 1970.

The 1959-61 Period

1. In May 1959 the 559th Transportation Group was established, consisting of a small headquarters staff located in Hanoi and one operational subordinate, Battalion 70, located at Ho Village in the southwestern portion of Quang Binh Province, North Vietnam. The headquarters staff was primarily responsible for coordinating the activities of the 70th Battalion with General Directorate of Rear Services elements responsible for supply movements within North Vietnam. The 70th Battalion, with a strength of about 500 men, was responsible for the actual infiltration of men and material from North Vietnam into South Vietnam.

2. Coincident with the formation of the National Liberation Front for South Vietnam (NLF/FSV) in January 1961, the rate of infiltration into South Vietnam increased sharply. In February, Battalion 70 was redesignated Group 70 and its strength was increased to about 2,000 men, making it a regimental-size unit. Subsequently, it has often been referred to as the 70th Transportation Regiment of the 559th Group.

3. By the end of 1961, Group 70 contained two communications-liaison battalions, two infantry companies, a political staff, and a rear services staff. The first communications-liaison battalion was responsible for ten communications-liaison or T stations* numbered 1 to 10 which were located along the infiltration route from just north of the DMZ southwest to the Ban Dong area of Laos. The

* A communications-liaison or T station is a small way station for the support of personnel moving by foot through the infiltration system.

second communications-liaison battalion was also responsible for a series of ten T stations; these were numbered 11 to 20 and ran along the infiltration route from Ban Dong into Thua Thien Province in South Vietnam. Both the first and second communications-liaison battalions had an estimated strength of about 800 men, with the size of subordinate T stations ranging from 60 to 80 men.

4. The 70th Group had two independent infantry companies directly subordinate to its headquarters that provided route security. The first infantry company protected the infiltration route from attack by ARVN forces operating out of the area currently known as Military Region 1. The second infantry company, located in the Tchepone area of Laos, protected the route from attack by the Laotian troops of General Phoumi-Nosavan.

5. During this period the personnel infiltration route of the 70th Group originated at Ho Village and ran south along the Long Dai River toward Mountain 1001. From Mountain 1001 the trail moved through the western end of the DMZ into Laos. After entering Laos the route turned southward paralleling the Lao-South Vietnamese border and continued into the Ban Dong area where it crossed Route 9. Below Route 9 the trail extended along the present alignment of Routes 92 and 922 into Thua Thien Province South Vietnam.

6. By the end of 1961 the Communists in Southern Laos and South Vietnam were being supplied from North Vietnam through Laos by primitive transport* on trails and inland waterways. The supply transport route followed the Se Bang Hieng River valley around the end of the DMZ to the Tchepone area of Laos. Supplies were moved further south from the Tchepone area on foot trails or in native water craft on the Se Kong River.

The 1962-65 Period

7. In 1962 the Communists in South Vietnam began receiving increasing support from North Vietnam via Laos. For its part the 559th expanded the capacity of the Laotian infiltration system by

* *Primitive transport includes the movement of supplies by porters, bicycles, and pack animals.*

constructing new roads and improving the existing infiltration trails. This added capability supported a major change in Communist strategy from an internally supported insurgency to an externally supported war involving major combat units.

8. To provide increasing external support for South Vietnam, the North Vietnamese began improving Route 15/12 through Mu Gia Pass and began construction of Route 23 in Laos.* This new road ran from the terminus of Route 12 as far south as the Muong Phine area where it intersected with Route 9. Since Route 9, constructed by the French years earlier, ran from the Muong Phine area east through Tchepone to Ban Dong, the supply road through Mu Gia Pass was now linked with the personnel infiltration trail which ran from the western DMZ through Ban Dong. Thus, by the end of 1962 the Communists had a truckable route from Mu Gia Pass to as far south as Ban Dong.

9. Early in 1963 the Communists also began to make improvements in their personnel infiltration system in the North Vietnamese Panhandle. They constructed a new road, Route 103, as far south as the DMZ area to shorten the distance infiltrators would have to walk inside North Vietnam. After 1963, infiltrators entered the 559th portion of the infiltration route at Station T-1** just north of Mountain 1001 above the DMZ.

10. In order to expedite the movement of men and supplies to South Vietnam, the 70th Group, formerly located at Ho Village, North Vietnam, moved to the Ban Dong area of Laos where the supply and personnel infiltration routes joined. In addition, the 70th Group ceased to operate the infiltration system beyond the junction of Routes 92 and 922. The route beyond this area was taken over by a new 559th subordinate, the 71st Group.

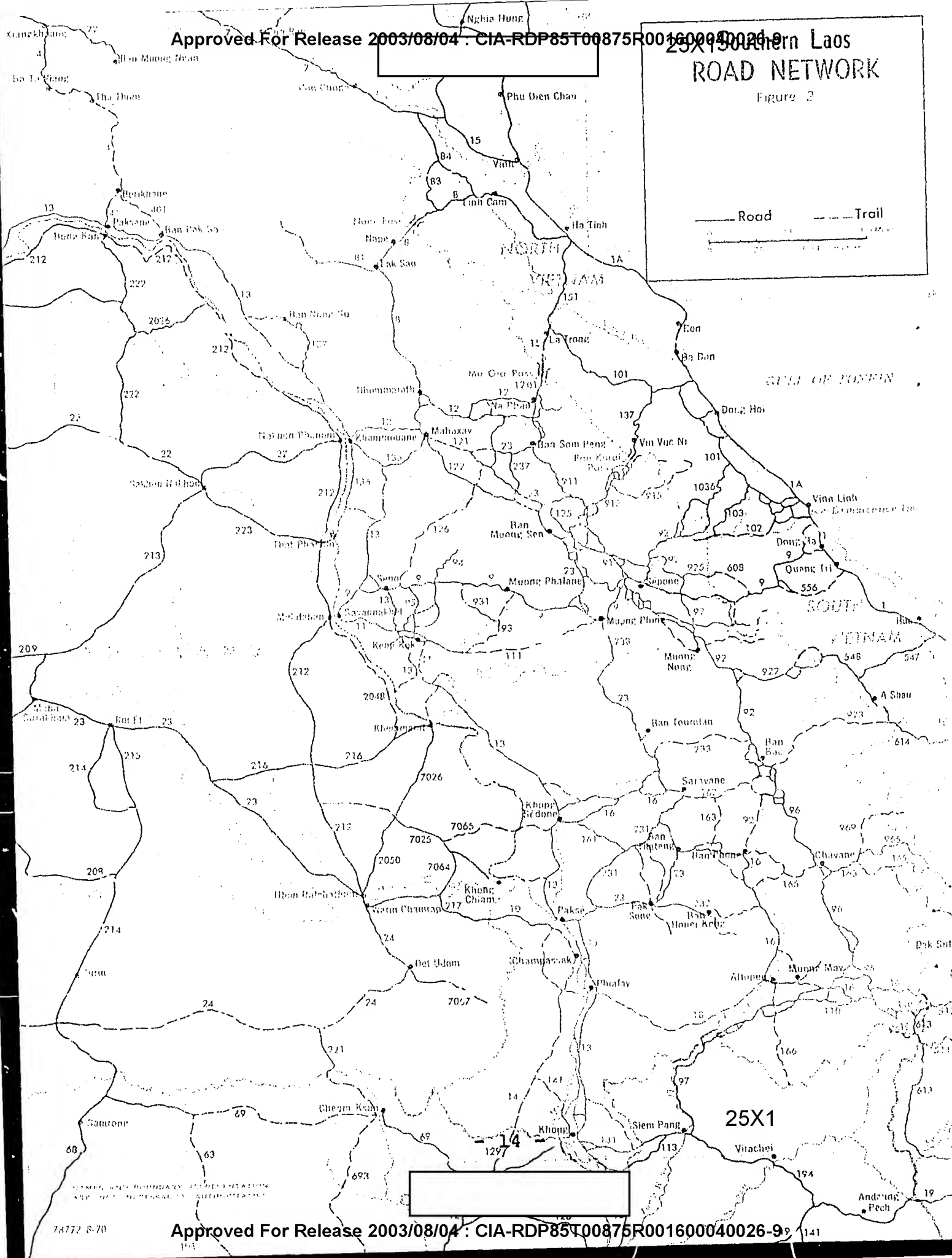
11. The 71st Group was formed from infiltrators from North Vietnam and former cadres of Group 70. It was headquartered approximately 10 miles east of the present junction of Routes 92 and 922 and was responsible for at least 14 T

* For details on the southern Laos road network, see Figure 2.

** Also known as Station 70.

25X150 Northern Laos ROAD NETWORK

Figure 2



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stations which ran in a southeasterly direction along the Lao-South Vietnamese border into Quang Nam Province. The 71st Group is believed to have been organized into four battalions with a personnel strength of 1,500 to 2,500 men.

12. The route structure in the area of the 71st Group's operations was substantially improved and expanded during the 1962-65 period. In February 1963, for example, the former cart path from Ban Dong to Muong Nong was made truck passable and turned into a main supply artery, identified as strategic Route 92. Later that same year construction on extensions of Route 92 south of Muong Nong began. Now called 922, this new route ran from Muong Nong in a southeastern direction to the Se La Mang River and continued on to the South Vietnamese border north of the A Shau Valley. In November 1964, at the end of the rainy season in Laos, the North Vietnamese began extending Route 92 south from the Muong Nong area. Construction on this route was continued through the 1965 wet season, and by the end of 1965 the Communists had a road extending more than 30 miles further to the Ban Bac area.

13. In order to gain maximum benefit from the improving Viet Cong situation in the South, Hanoi began the infiltration of at least three regular North Vietnamese Army regiments to South Vietnam in the 1964-65 dry season. These units, which proceeded along the infiltration route maintained by the 559th, entered South Vietnam then moved south to the Central Highlands. At the same time, Hanoi began to upgrade the firepower of Communist main force units in South Vietnam by progressively arming them with a standard family of small arms using one caliber of ammunition and by providing them with more modern supporting arms. This conversion shifted the logistic burden from sources of supply inside South Vietnam, such as captured Allied ammunition, to sources outside South Vietnam. Thereafter, the Communists were required to send substantial quantities of arms and ammunition to South Vietnam on a continuing basis.

14. In 1965 the headquarters of the 559th relocated from the Hanoi area to the North Vietnamese Panhandle. This move was probably prompted

by the need to provide closer coordination for the surging level of shipments into Laos. By the end of 1965 the 559th had expanded into a truck transportation unit in addition to its portering and personnel infiltration functions.

1966 and 1967

15. During 1966 and 1967 the 559th rapidly expanded both its area of operation and its logistics capability. This expansion underscored both the increasing pace of the war in the South and the increased effectiveness of Operation Market Time which greatly reduced the Communists' capability to infiltrate supplies directly into South Vietnam by sea.

16. To perform this expanded role, the 559th was completely reorganized. By late 1966, its headquarters deployed into the Laotian Panhandle for the first time. Moreover, a series of Binh Trams (BT) were established to replace the 70th and 71st Groups. Each BT had subordinate transportation, engineer, infantry, medical, and air defense elements to insure the expeditious movement and protection of men and material in its area of responsibility. They acted as geographical control authorities for personnel and logistic movement through a specific area. In order to simplify the administrative structure of the new BT system, the route for personnel infiltration was shifted from the western DMZ to the roadnet through Ban Karai Pass.* The T stations formerly subordinate to the 70th and 71st Groups were resubordinated to the various BTs, and additional stations were added to cover the southward expansion of the personnel infiltration route in Laos. The responsibility for personnel moving through the Panhandle on foot remained with the T stations, while the control of truck movements was handled directly by the BTs themselves. This division of responsibilities enhanced the security of the overall system. For example, most of the infiltrated personnel captured in South Vietnam have had very little knowledge of the supply transport system.

* Route 912 was constructed through the Ban Karai Pass in May 1966.

17. During 1966, construction of new roads in the Laotian Panhandle took place at a rapid pace. In addition to Route 912, another new road, Route 911, was constructed, reducing transit distance from the Mu Gia Pass to Tchepone by one-third. This road also intersected with Route 912 coming from Ban Karai. Another new road designated Route 913 was constructed bypassing Tchepone to the south and intersecting with Route 92 just north of Muong Nong. This new route bypassed Ban Dong, the former hub of the infiltration system in the Panhandle. Route 922 running east from Muong Nong was extended east into South Vietnam where it joined Route 548 which ran south via the A Shau Valley. Below Ban Bac, Route 96 was constructed from the terminus of Route 92, running south through Chavane toward the tri-border area of Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam. Just north of the tri-border, Route 96 intersected with another new route, Route 110. Constructed in an east-west direction along the southern border of Laos from the tri-border area to the Se Kong River, Route 110 joined another new road, Route 97, running into Cambodia.

18. Along this rapidly expanding route structure, eight BTs were deployed with the following responsibilities*: BT-1 for the area along Route 911 from just below Mu Gia Pass south to its intersection with Route 912; BT-2 for the route structure from Route 912 south through Tchepone; and BT-3 for movement along Route 92 to its junction with Route 922. Whereas movements from the junction of Routes 922 and 92 to South Vietnam were under the jurisdiction of BT-4, those closer to the South Vietnam border area were controlled by BT-7 located in the A Shau Valley.

19. Although movement along Route 92 south of its junction with Route 922 was also controlled by BT-4 for a short distance, most of this route was controlled by BT-5, located in the Ban Bac area. Movements along Route 96 into and through the Chavane area were the responsibility of BT-6 which also moved men and material into South Vietnam over Route 165/966.

** These eight BTs had a total of 15 transportation battalions, 9 antiaircraft artillery battalions, 13 engineer battalions, and several independent companies.*

20. In the southernmost portion of the Laotian Panhandle, BT-8 had the primary mission for receiving and transshipping supplies moving into the Laotian Panhandle from Cambodia. These supplies were forwarded to units operating in the southern Panhandle or to the B-3 Front area of South Vietnam. Some supplies were also moved to BT-8 down Route 96 by BT-6 at Chavane.

21. During the summer wet season of 1967 the headquarters of the 559th and most of its personnel withdrew from the Laotian Panhandle back into North Vietnam. Only a detached element, later known as the Forward Headquarters 559th, remained to conduct housekeeping operations during the wet season. By November the 559th had returned to Laos to begin preparations for the dry season.

22. During the dry season the Communists dramatically increased the flow of men and material to South Vietnam to support the offensive planned for Tet 1968. Most of the personnel and supply shipments were destined for Communist forces operating in I Corps, South Vietnam, which includes Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Quang Nam, Quang Tin, and Quang Ngai Provinces. Prior to the planned offensives, supplies were stockpiled in Laos near the border, both to shorten the supply lines in the Khe Sanh area and to enable the forces to maintain themselves during the offensive. To the south the Communists developed a major logistic complex in the A Shau Valley during 1967 to support forces in the Tri-Thien-Hue Military Region and Military Region 5 in South Vietnam. Supplies moving through the A Shau Valley were destined either for the Hue area or were moved south into Military Region 5 for units operating around Da Nang and further south along the coast. By the end of 1967 the expanded route and logistic structure in the southern Panhandle enabled the Communists to supply arms and ammunition to the B-3 Front overland from North Vietnam.

The 1968 - April 1970 Period

23. High levels of personnel infiltration continued through the summer wet season to provide replacement for the heavy casualties taken by the Communists during the 1968 offensives. To meet this need, most of the 559th's units remained in

the Laotian Panhandle during the wet season for the first time.

24. After the failure of the large offensives of Tet and May and the abortive effort in August 1968, the Communists abandoned the strategy of large unit warfare. They returned to a strategy of protracted warfare centered on indirect attacks by fire rather than large unit engagements. This new strategy relieved some of the strain on the enemy's logistics system, giving him time to rebuild his depleted personnel strength.

25. In the fall of 1968 the 559th was reorganized again. This reorganization was aimed at providing greater redundancy in the Panhandle logistics system because of a sudden and substantial upsurge in the level of Allied air attacks in southern Laos. These attacks disrupted supply movements, causing significant logistic problems for the enemy. In adjusting to this situation the Communists doubled the number of BTs to 16 and reduced somewhat the area of responsibility of each. The BTs were renumbered and were relocated. The transportation, engineering, and antiaircraft strengths of the BTs were increased, new bypass roads were constructed, and a POL pipeline was extended into the Laotian Panhandle through the Mu Gia Pass.

26. By early January 1969 the reinforcement and reorganization of the 559th had enabled the Communists to alleviate many of their logistic problems and resulted in increasingly large numbers of vehicles moving south on the major supply routes. The overall effectiveness of this reorganization was indicated in a message from the Deputy Director of Rear Services in Hanoi to the 559th which stated that the 559th had achieved a great victory and that the volume of supplies moved to South Vietnam had attained a new high in February.

27. By late May 1969 the enemy apparently felt that adequate levels of supplies and personnel had been delivered to their forces in the south. They began to withdraw units of the 559th from the Laotian Panhandle and to close down logistic operations there as they had done in 1967. By July 1969, at least half and probably more of the 559th forces had returned to North Vietnam.

28. During October and November 1969 the headquarters and large numbers of personnel of the 559th returned to the Laotian Panhandle. Initially, activity focused on the restoration of the road-net which was opened for through traffic to South Vietnam by the end of November. An intensive program also was launched for constructing a new access route through the western DMZ area. By December 1969, Route 1036, which now connected the North Vietnamese Panhandle through the Ban Raving Pass with the Tchepone area in Laos, was sustaining vehicle traffic. In addition, the North Vietnamese established a second POL pipeline into the Laotian Panhandle. This one ran through the western DMZ area toward Tchepone. The new western DMZ road and POL pipeline substantially reduced the 559th's logistics burden in the northern Panhandle. Supplies now could be shipped as far south as the DMZ in the sanctuary of North Vietnam, thus reducing their vulnerability to Allied air attack.

29. By early December the logistics system in the Laotian Panhandle was operational and the 559th began a series of "crash" programs to move supplies to South Vietnam. These programs, however, gave way to the "General Transportation Offensive" which continued from December 1969 through April 1970, with shipments at substantially higher levels than ever before.

APPENDIX B

Chronology of Key Events
in the Development
of the 559th Transportation Group

May	1959	The 559th is formed with one operational unit, the 70th Battalion.
Feb	1961	The 70th Battalion is reinforced to a regimental-size unit and redesignated the 70th Group.
Dec	1962	A truckable roadway is completed from Mu Gia Pass into the Laotian Panhandle as far south as Ban Dong.
Feb	1963	Another regimental-size unit, Group 71, is added to the 559th structure.
Fall	1965	The headquarters of the 559th moves from Hanoi into the North Vietnamese Panhandle.
Fall	1965	The roadnet in the Panhandle is extended as far south as Ban Bac.
Fall	1966	Operation Market Time drastically reduces direct sea infiltration of Communist supplies into South Vietnam.
May	1966	A new access route from North Vietnam into the Laotian Panhandle is opened through Ban Karai Pass.
Fall	1966	The roadnet in the Panhandle is extended south of the tri-border of Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam. The roadnet is also extended into Cambodia along the Se Kong River.
Fall	1966	The headquarters of the 559th deploys to the Laotian Panhandle for the first time.

Dry season	1966-1967	The 559th is reorganized with the 70th and 71st Groups being replaced by a series of eight Binh Trams.
Summer	1967	During the wet season the headquarters of the 559th and most of its personnel withdraw from the Panhandle back into North Vietnam, leaving a detached element, later known as the Forward Headquarters 559th, behind to conduct housekeeping operations.
Dry season	1967-1968	The flow of men and material through the 559th system increases dramatically in support of the Tet, May, and August offensives of 1968.
Fall	1968	The 559th reorganizes, and the number of its Binh Trams doubles -- increasing from 8 to 16.
Summer	1968	Most of the 559th remains in the Panhandle during the wet season to handle the high level of personnel infiltration.
Dec	1969	A new access road is constructed from North Vietnam around the western DMZ into the Lao-tian Panhandle.
Summer	1969	The 559th withdraws from the Panhandle during the wet season.
May	1970	The 559th prepares to withdraw from the Panhandle during the wet season but remains in Laos, apparently in response to Allied incursions into Cambodia.
Oct	1970	The Forward Headquarters of the 559th reorganizes into Headquarters Group 470 which takes control of the Binh Trams south of Ban Bac.
Oct-Dec	1970	At least three new Binh Trams numbered 50, 51, and 54 are detected in the southern Panhandle. These units are believed to have the mission of supporting Communist forces in Cambodia.